LISTING OF THE CLAIMS:

The listing of the claims below replaces all prior versions of the claims.

1. (Currently Amended) A method for purifying a polyhistidine-tagged cytokine from a protein preparation derived from a mammalian cell culture, wherein the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine is present in the protein preparation at a concentration of no more than 2mg/L, said method comprising:

(a) concentrating the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine in the protein preparation with a negatively charged capture support, wherein the negatively charged capture support comprises heparin, comprising the steps of:

(i) contacting the protein preparation with the capture support;

(ii) washing the capture support with a capture support washing buffer of low ionic strength to remove interfering molecules but not the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine from the capture support; and

(iii) eluting the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine from the capture support with a capture support eluting buffer of high ionic strength;

(b) purifying the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine from the eluate of step (a) (iii) with a tag-specific affinity support, wherein the affinity support comprises nickel nitrilotriacetic acid immobilized on a solid support, comprising the steps of:

(i) contacting the eluate of step (a) (iii) with the tag-specific affinity support;

(ii) washing the affinity support with affinity support washing buffer of low ionic strength to remove some impurities but not the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine from the affinity support; and

(iii) eluting the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine from the affinity support with an affinity support eluting buffer.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the capture support washing buffer and the affinity support washing buffer comprise an ionic strength equivalent to from about 50 mM to about 150 mM salt equivalent.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein the capture support eluting buffer comprises an ionic strength equivalent to at least about 500 mM salt equivalent.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the capture support is applied to a column before or after contacting with the protein preparation.

5. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the affinity support is applied to a column before or after contacting with the eluate of the capture support.

6.-9. (Canceled)

10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein the affinity support eluting buffer comprises at least 50mM imidazole.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 10, wherein the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine is a 6x histidine tagged cytokine with a four-helix bundle motif.

12.-16. (Canceled)

17. (Currently Amended) A method for purifying a polyhistidine-tagged cytokine with a four-helix bundle motif from a protein preparation derived from a mammalian cell culture, wherein the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine is present in the protein preparation at a concentration of no more than 2mg/L, said method comprising:

(a) concentrating the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine in the protein preparation with a negatively charged capture support, wherein the negatively charged capture support comprises heparin, comprising the steps of:

(i) contacting the protein preparation with the capture support;

(ii) washing the capture support with a capture support washing buffer of an ionic strength equivalent to a concentration of about 50 mM to about 1 M to remove interfering molecules but not the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine from the capture support; and

(iii) eluting the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine from the capture support with a capture support eluting buffer of an ionic strength equivalent to a concentration of about 50 mM to about 1 M;

(b) purifying the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine from the eluate of step (a) (iii) with a tag-specific affinity support, wherein the affinity support comprises nickel nitrilotriacetic acid immobilized on a solid support, comprising the steps of:

(i) contacting the eluate of step (a) (iii) with the affinity support;

(ii) washing the affinity support with affinity support washing buffer of an ionic strength equivalent to a concentration of about 50 mM to about 1 M to remove some impurities but not the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine from the affinity support; and

(iii) eluting the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine from the affinity support with an affinity support eluting buffer comprising at least 50 mM imidazole.

18.- 24. (Canceled)

25. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine is a polyhistidine-tagged human cytokine.

26. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 25, wherein the human polyhistidine-tagged human cytokine is polyhistidine-tagged IL9ra.

27. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 17, wherein the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine is a polyhistidine-tagged human cytokine.

28. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 27, wherein the human polyhistidine-tagged human cytokine is polyhistidine-tagged IL9ra.

29. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the protein preparation is derived from a mammalian cell culture supernatant or a mammalian cell culture cell lysate.

30. (New) The method of claim 29, wherein the protein preparation is derived from a mammalian cell culture supernatant.

31. (New) The method of claim 30, wherein the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine is transiently expressed in the mammalian cell culture.

32. (New) The method of claim 30, wherein the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine is nearly 100% captured from the protein preparation with greater than 99% purity.

33. (New) The method of claim 17, wherein the protein preparation is derived from a mammalian cell culture supernatant or a mammalian cell culture cell lysate.

34. (New) The method of claim 33, wherein the protein preparation is derived from a mammalian cell culture supernatant.

35. (New) The method of claim 34, wherein the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine is transiently expressed in the mammalian cell culture.

36. (New) The method of claim 34, wherein the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine is nearly 100% captured from the protein preparation with greater than 99% purity.